

I have just read in the May magazine (yes, I know it's August now, but summer is always so busy!) that at the Scottish Sensory Centre Conference in March, Marc Marschark said that it was a myth that 'Cued Speech helps with reading skills'. I'm confused; there is a large amount of international research which demonstrates that Cued Speech gives invaluable help with reading skills.

Marc Marschark's lone opinion is contradicted by many leading scholars. For example, 42 international contributors (including 25 professors or assistant or associate professors with additional input from researchers and education practitioners) have contributed to the book 'Cued Speech and Cued Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children' (2010) which is itself edited by three professors from the USA and Europe. The book draws on twenty years of international research and practice to inform the four chapters which are devoted to the effects of Cued Speech use on the development of reading. The chapters includes theory and research around reading in the narrow sense (decoding), in a broader context (comprehension), phonological awareness, short-term memory, and rhyming ability.

Ruth Campbell, Ph.D. (*Professor Emeritus, Department of Cognitive, Perceptual and Brain Sciences, University College London*) gives an overview of this in the foreword to the above book:

'The importance of Cued Speech is that it opens up the world of spoken language to the deaf child in a clear and simple way, from the outset.' Research by Alegria and Leybaert, with colleagues led by Périer....'has shown conclusively that children exposed consistently to Cued Speech gained and maintained a headstart over deaf children of similar intelligence and skill who did not have Cued Speech. Those who started using Cued Speech before school were even more likely to forge ahead, often with literacy levels and styles indistinguishable from hearing children.'

It would be a tragedy if deaf children were denied the benefits of Cued Speech use because Marc Marschark's opinion is taken as fact.

For more information about the book referred to above go to:

<http://www.cuedspeech.org.uk/uploads/documents/New%20Cued%20Speech%20Book.pdf>

Anne Worsfold, August 2012